



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Brave Girl

Michelle Markel (Author), Melissa Sweet (Illustrator)

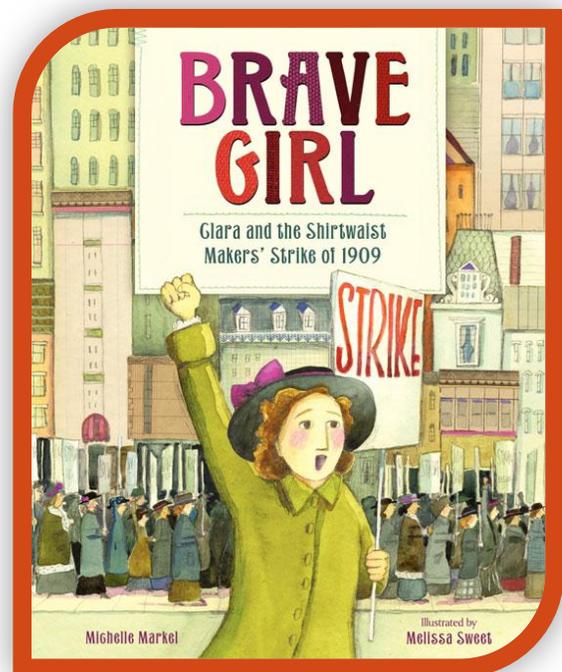
When Clara arrived in America, she couldn't speak English. She didn't know that young women had to go to work and that they traded an education for long hours of labor. Fed up with the mistreatment of her fellow laborers, Clara led the largest walkout of women workers the country had seen. From her short time in America, Clara learned that everyone deserved a fair chance and that you had to stand together and fight for what you wanted.

ISBN: 978-0061804427

Publisher: Balzer and Bray

Year Published: 2013

Age Range: 5–8



Book Themes

Immigration, Women's History, Labor, Social Justice

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story. See also ADL's [Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying for Elementary Age Children](#).

- factory
- filthy
- fired
- grit
- fiery
- fined
- garment worker
- hunching

- immigrants
- inspected
- pickets
- revolt
- rights
- salaries
- seamstress
- steamship
- strike
- tenement
- uncrushable
- union
- walkout
- Yiddish

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Who and what do you see on the cover of the book?
- What do you think the book might be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout the reading to check comprehension and keep the students engaged:

- Why are the young women carrying sewing machines instead of books? (page 8)
- Why do you think the young women are carrying signs? (page 19)
- Why are all of the women standing outside? (page 26)

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What happens in the story?
- How would you describe Clara's personality? How did it change throughout the book?
- What does this quote that someone said about Clara mean: "the girl's got grit?"
- Why do you think Clara's father couldn't get a job?
- Why did Clara decided to become a garment worker?
- What was it like to work in the factory? How were the workers treated?
- How do you think you would feel working there? What advice would you give people who worked there?
- What was Clara's life like when she was trying to hold onto her job and also go to school?
- What do you think a union is? (Explain that a **union** is a group of workers that work together to make where they work safer and better, and to make sure they are all treated fairly.)
- How do you think Clara felt when the men didn't think the women were "tough enough" to go on strike? How does she respond?
- How did Clara convince the other girls to go on strike?
- How did the bosses treat Clara?
- Why did Clara think they needed to do something bigger than strike on a picket line?
- How did Clara help make the largest walkout of women workers in history?

- How did others help with their protests and strike?
- What was the impact of the strike?
- What do you think was the message of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Imagine and draw/write the next few pages of the book

Remind students about how the book ended by re-reading pages 28–31. Ask students: *What happens at the end of the book?* Remind students that at the end of the book, the women are on the picket line striking all winter long and gaining a lot of support. In the end, they are allowed to form a union and work out a deal to work fewer days and get paid more money. Clara decides she is going to continue fighting for the rights of workers. Ask students: *What do you think might happen next in the story? What do you think Clara will do? What do you think it was like to work in the factory when they had more rights?* Have students imagine what might happen if the book continued for a few more pages. Instruct them to take their ideas and write and/or draw the next scene or two as they imagine it, using the style of the illustrator as much as possible. When completed, students can share their pages of the book with the rest of the class by posting them on the wall and doing a gallery walk. You can also invite parents/family members in for a whole class reading of the book and include the students' additional pages.

2. Learn more about the garment workers and the Shirtwaist Strike of 1909

Read aloud the last pages of the book on pages 32-33, which describes more about immigration in the late 1800s and early 1920s, the garment industry, how the workers were treated in those factories and the general strike in 1909. Explain that the New York Shirtwaist Strike of 1909, upon which the book is based, was a strike involving primarily Jewish women, many of whom were immigrants, who worked in factories making clothes. The strike, which was led by Clara Lemlich, began in November 1909. In February 1910, the union worked out a deal with the owners to get better salaries, work fewer hours and improve where they worked to make it safer. If you want to give students an opportunity to learn more about unions, work and labor history, you can engage them in research projects on different aspects of labor history and/or interview their parents, grandparents and other family members about their participation in unions or organizing at work to improve conditions. For more information about teaching young children about work and unions, see these resources: [Hard Labor: How unions fought to honor the American worker](#) (Fact Monster) [Unions, Work, and Class in the Early Childhood Classroom](#) (Teaching for Change Books) and [Labor Movement](#) (History).

3. Social Justice in my world

Remind students that the book is about Clara and the other girls fighting to have the factory where they work be safer, better and to make sure everyone is treated fairly. Ask students to think about other things they think are unfair or unjust, either in school, their community or the country/world. Remind them that Clara thought it was unfair how the people who worked in the factory were treated and she wanted to do something about it and did. Together, brainstorm a list of their ideas about areas of unfairness. Then have each student select one of the issues/problems and write a persuasive letter (to their parents, to their school, to their mayor, congressperson or President) about what they think is unfair, why and what should be done about it.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on identity, stereotypes and role models.

Curriculum Resources

Mo'Ne Davis and Gender Stereotypes," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/mone-davis-and-gender-stereotypes.html.

Social Justice Poetry," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/social-justice-poetry.html.

Stereotypes of Girls and Women in the Media," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/stereotypes-of-girls-and-women-in-the-media.html.

Websites

10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/10-ways-youth-can-engage-in.html

A list of ideas for bringing social activism into the classroom and outside of the school walls. These strategies can be acted upon individually, organized together as a group and young people can join with a larger effort that is taking place locally or nationally.

Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment.html

Tips for the classroom educator to create an anti-bias learning environment.

The Question Corner

www.adl.org/education-outreach/early-childhood/c/the-question-corner.html

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children.

Women's History Month Resources

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/womens-history-month.html

A list of PreK-12 curriculum and other educational resources to bring Women's History Month to classrooms and schools.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Gender and Sexism, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/gender-sexism.html

Social Justice, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/social-justice.html

Socioeconomic Bias, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/general-books.html?generalsub=socioeconomic-bias